Strange Bedfellows by Beboppin' Betty

Category: Stranger Things, 2016
Language: English
Characters: Steve H.
Status: Completed
Published: 2019-07-07 22:05:33
Updated: 2019-07-07 22:05:33
Packaged: 2019-12-12 18:49:24
Rating: K+
Chapters: 1
Words: 5,353
Publisher: www.fanfiction.net
Summary: Steve and Robin's friendship thrives, but when unrequited love is added to the mix, things get complicated. Minor S3 spoilers. Steve/Robin

Strange Bedfellows

A/N: My first foray into Stranger Things. I love the Steve/Robin dynamic, but forgive me if the characterization is off. I made up Robin's last name, and since I don't usually write in present tense, please forgive errors.

"This place has one bedroom."

"I know! It's great, right?"

"... so do you want the top or bottom bunk?"

Steve stops his twirl around the tiny apartment to stare, wide-eyed and uncomprehending. She rolls her eyes. "Dingus, I am *not* sharing a room with you."

"No! Duh, look, we have an *alcove*. We'll put up a curtain!"

The aforementioned alcove is a few feet of space wedged next to the kitchen, and Robin can only purse her lips and give Steve a pointed look. She's seen trembling puppies less excited, and really, it's either this or that studio above the Indian restaurant near the old mall. She puffs out a breath. "What makes you think you get the bedroom?"

His grin is quick and infectious. "Well, I'm only thinking of you. I plan to have a steady stream of ladies knocking down that door. I'll need the privacy."

"Pfft. I think our experiment at Scoops proved what a ladies man you are not. Do you really think that you'll have more girls over here than I will?"

His face goes blank as he considers, then: "We can share!"

Robin finally cracks and snorts out a laugh. "In your dreams, Harrington."

His eyes are wide with wonder at the possibilities. "You have *no* idea, Martino."

Robin rolls her eyes and smacks his arm, and pulls out a pen to fill out the application.

"No, your fingers are wrong. Like this."

Steve lets Robin pull his brand new guitar into her lap to show him proper finger placement for the chord he'd been fooling around with. He'd mainly bought it to up his cool factor with the latest girl he had a thing for, but watching Robin casually strumming out the song he'd totally sucked at playing makes him feel...inadequate...somehow. He swallows his pride and asks for some more pointers, and for once she doesn't play smartass and gives him some good tips.

"You should teach," he says suddenly, and to his surprise Robin blushes, then tries to cover it with her usual bravado. "Unlike you, I have no desire to spend my time with annoying children."

Her barbs don't even register anymore, and he presses on – serious, but also seriously intrigued by the pink in her cheeks. "Uh, hello? I'm not a kid, and I want to learn. There are probably lots of guys out there who want a bossy chick telling them how to play guitar. Besides, you keep talking about needing more money."

"Whatever. I mean, I'm not a pro at guitar anyway." She refuses to meet his eyes as she picks at the guitar strings, and it hits him: this is her weakness. He's shocked. "Don't tell me you, the self-professed *band geek*, don't think you're good enough?" Another realization strikes him then. "Wait - I've never heard you play anything. How is that possible?"

How *is* that possible? They've spent practically every waking moment together since that thing with the Russians. They *live* together, for Christ's sake. "Don't tell me you gave it up?" He's ashamed to realize he never really asks her about it; doesn't even know what instrument she plays. The guilt wells up so fast he doesn't know what to do with it all, so he blindly shoves the guitar back into her lap. "Show me what you got, Hendrix."

She's clearly uncomfortable, but he considers it a testament to their friendship that she doesn't protest. He watches her spin the tuning

knobs (something he'd never thought to do), and the hard edge in her voice is replaced with something softer and quieter he didn't know she possessed. "Like I said, I'm not a pro with guitar. It wasn't my main instrument."

He's enthralled with this new side of Robin and doesn't want to spoil it. "What was?"

"Cello. Any requests? And I don't know any Springsteen songs," she says immediately, which makes him chuckle. He's embarrassed to admit to even himself that he has no idea what a cello is. He's instantly envious as her fingers nimbly pick out a Zeppelin tune – Over the Hills and Far Away – one he didn't think she even knew. Robin regularly subjects him to punk bands no one's ever heard of, so he's even more impressed. She sings along, but he can tell it's not her strong suit. Her magic lies in her fingers.

"We need to start a band," he declares immediately when she finishes the song, and that seems to bring her back to herself. She snickers. "Who? You, me, and Dusty Buns?"

"I'm serious! Girls will be throwing themselves at us!"

She actually seems to consider it for a moment, even though they both know he's not really serious.

"For real, Robs, you're teaching me that." She shrugs but seems pleased, so he decides to roll with the momentum. "Is your cello here? I am an enormous ass for having never asked before, but I want to hear it!" He looks around their tiny apartment, trying to imagine where it could be kept. Robin eyes him shrewdly. "You have no idea what it is, do you?"

He opens his mouth to deny it, then deflates. "No."

She laughs her wonderful full-belly laugh and jumps off the couch. He wonders how long she's been waiting for him to ask, and scowls. Douchebag Harrington strikes again. When he sees her wrestling a human-sized black case out of the bedroom, he finally understands why she'd fought so hard for the closet space. "It's a giant violin," he brilliantly observes as she sets it up, and when she doesn't rise to the

bait he realizes how important this must be to her.

She sits opposite him, straddling the giant violin, and he memorizes every inch of the image. Robin in her cutoff shorts and ratty white tank top, bare feet with chipped blue nail polish nervously jiggling on their gross brown carpet, handling her instrument with a reverence he doesn't understand. She gives him an oddly shy look, then closes her eyes and sweeps the bow across the strings. That first deep, melancholic note sends a shiver down Steve's back.

His mouth falls open as he watches her. He has never seen Robin so passionate in anything; he feels like he's intruding on a private moment. The music she plays is visceral and evokes a feeling in his chest he can't identify. He feels small and insignificant, and so, so proud.

The final notes echo through the room and she puts her bow down. Hair sticks to the sweat on her forehead and she's breathing raggedly, and Steve can only stare. "Dude," he breathes after a moment. "Who *are* you?" He jumps to his feet to drag her into his arms in a crushing hug. "That was fucking amazing!"

She squirms slightly but doesn't get away. "Stop being weird, it's no big deal."

"Uh, I beg to differ." And judging by the flush in her cheeks, so did she. "I mean, what was that? How did you keep this a secret? Why aren't you famous?"

She snorts in an *oh, please* kind of way, but Steve won't drop it. Finally she admits that she'd planned on playing that piece for a music school audition, but had chickened out. She switches from water to that bottle of whiskey they had when she tells him the story, and Steve is outraged. "Are you seriously telling me you thought going to Hawkins Community College for bookkeeping was a better plan than *music school*? You just... you're an idiot." Robin scowls and downs a mouthful of whiskey and refuses to meet his eyes. He grabs her chin and forces her to look at him. "Robin, I have never heard anything like that before. You're incredible." She slaps his hand away and blinks furiously, clearly trying to not cry. "I'm not."

He's never seen this kind of vulnerability in her, and it stirs something in him. He grabs the whiskey and drinks to dull the confusion. "You *are*."

"What about you?" she counters, throwing up the walls once again. "What are you doing with your life? Manual labour doesn't exactly scream 'Steve Harrington'."

"Well, I'm not wasting the kind of talent you are."

Her nostrils flare and she storms into the bedroom, slamming doors behind her. He feels surly and restless, and doesn't know why. Still, he notices in the days that follow that she doesn't put her cello away.

Steve jumps to his feet the moment he hears her key in the lock. He bounces from foot to foot as she comes in, and tries to judge her mood by the set of her shoulders and the way she turns to face the door for a long moment when she shuts it. "Well?" he asks hopefully.

"It was...amazing." The smile on her face is all the assurance he needs to breathe a sigh of relief and grab a couple of beers from the fridge. "So? Tell me!" She jumps up onto the counter and sips the beer and can't stop grinning. "She kissed me. It was perfect." Steve's heart shudders, but he ignores it in favour of forcing Robin to give him a high-five. "Way to go, Martino! I knew you had it in you! What happened, exactly? I need details." He smiles inwardly at the notion that he's eagerly engaging in 'girl talk', but the look on Robin's face makes it all worth it. She kicks her heels against the cupboard doors as she regales him, then hesitates. "I never really thought it would happen, you know?"

Steve hates it when she talks like this. He can't pretend to relate, but the thought that there are people out there who'd want to make Robin unhappy make him *so* angry. He jumps up next to her on the counter and nudges her with his shoulder. "This broad would be an absolute moron to not fall for you."

Robin nudges him back. "I'll see if she has a friend for you."

Steve raises his eyebrows at this unexpected benefit. He's never

considered that Robin could be his wingman, but of course it makes total sense.

"You have to do it, Dingus. It's perfect."

"How, exactly?"

"Were you not instrumental in stopping, like, three Apocalypses?"

Robin watches Steve's face as the idea takes hold, then as he discards it. She sighs and rallies. "You're made for this job and you know it. Why fight it?"

"Come on, you know I could never pull off a beige uniform."

She wiggles her brows. "I bet there will be plenty of hungry housewives who'd be happy to pull it off for you." When he smirks into his milkshake, Robin knows she's hooked him. "Working construction is *not* working for your dating game, you have to admit." In fact, Steve's hardly brought any girls around in ages. She thinks back and can't picture anyone since around the time she'd started playing her cello again. That time she'd tried to set him up with Lisa's best friend had been a spectacular failure, too.

"Hopper will laugh me out of town if I show up to his office asking for a job."

Robin scoffs, then softens. She can see through every inch of bullshit Steve throws at her and she knows he doesn't think he can do it. "Stevo, that dude came back from the dead after fighting a bunch of alien monsters *and* Russians. His kid has superpowers. Do you really think you're the most ridiculous thing he'll ever see? Have a little faith in yourself."

Steve leans back into the booth and picks up a fry, suddenly annoyingly smug. "Gee, Martino, that's pretty hypocritical, wouldn't you say?"

Fuck. She walked right into that one.

She sets her jaw and flings a fry at him, and of course the bastard

deftly catches it in his mouth. He hasn't stopped hounding her about sending in her audition tapes, and now he thinks he can manipulate her into it? They don't need a lot of words for a conversation anymore. She narrows her eyes. "How Machiavellian of you, Harrington." Still, if it means he'll go after a dream she didn't think he'd ever realized then she'll do whatever she has to to help him along. "Fine. I'll make you a deal. I'll send in my tapes if you apply for the job."

He grins that smug grin and holds out his hand to shake on it. Instead, she slaps his hand and pulls the application out of her purse and slides it across the table. "No time like the present," she says sweetly. He scowls and snatches the pen from her. "I'm only doing this for you, you know. You've been such a butt."

"A *butt*?" she screeches with laughter, but knows he's right. Time to shit or get off the pot, as it were. Impulsively she reaches over and ruffles his hair, and nearly suffocates with laughter at the look of horror he gives her. He grabs her hand as she pulls back and licks the back of it. "Dude! That is so fucking gross!" she yells through her giggles, and roughly scrubs her hand with a napkin. "*This* is why women are so much better than men."

"*Some* women," he replies pointedly, not looking up from the application, but Robin sees him smiling.

He can't believe it. He really, truly cannot believe it. Robin will lord it over him for the rest of his life once she finds out, but despite that, he can't wait to tell her. "Robs, are you home?" he calls, barely through the door. The place is quiet, but he sees the bedroom door open so pokes his head in to check and sees her curled up on the bed. "Robs! Guess what? I-" He stops suddenly when he sees her shaking, hears her hitching breaths. He's beside her immediately, hand on her shoulder. "What's wrong?" She shakes her head but he can see the dark streaks of mascara staining her cheeks. "Robin," he says more urgently, afraid. This is a new version he hasn't met yet, and seeing her so distraught scares the shit out of him. "Did somebody die?"

She shakes her head again and curls into herself even more. His stomach drops as he remembers her audition tapes. "Ok, I'm coming

in," he says and kicks off his shoes so he can crawl into the bed next to her. He wraps his arm around her and she lays her head on his shoulder, and he strokes her back until she calms down.

"Lisa dumped me," she explains finally. The relief he feels makes him feel like an asshole, but he reasons that girlfriends come and go, but music schools don't. He figures a lame platitude about being sorry to hear it isn't what Robin needs right then, so he stays quiet and keeps listening. She traces the design on his shirt with her finger. "She said that she was wrong – she doesn't like girls, and that this was all just some *experiment."*

His instant rage takes him by surprise. He wants to find Lisa and kick the shit out of her for this, but all he does to show it is tighten his hold on Robin and angrily hiss about what a bitch Lisa is. After awhile she starts sniffling again, and when she looks up at him, tears are streaking down her cheeks. "Why does it have to be this way?" Her sadness is so palpable Steve feels a lump form in his throat. "Why can't we choose who to love?" Steve smooths back her hair and kisses her brow and cries with her. "God, I wish I knew."

They lay there for awhile longer, both twisted up inside for reasons that were heartbreakingly alike.

"Hey," he says quietly. "I have something that might cheer you up."

She's skeptical but no longer crying so he slides out of bed and orders her to wait. It only takes a few moments to change and he saunters back in in his new uniform, tipping down his aviators suggestively. "Deputy Harrington, at your service."

"No!" she gasps, and breaks into a grin so wide it lights up the room. She jumps off the bed and throws her arms around his neck. "I *told* you, Dingus!" Then she freezes and pulls back slowly, and a sly smile crawls across her mouth. "Deputy Dingus." She throws back her head and laughs, all trace of Lisa's destruction gone for the moment. She's still smiling as she hugs him again. "Thanks," she whispers, and all he wants to do is kiss her.

Robin holds the letter with shaking hands and flings aside the curtain

to Steve's alcove. He's face-down, snoring into his pillow, blankets at his waist. She kneels on the futon next to him and prods his shoulder. "Steve." She tries again, no luck. Finally she smacks his shoulder hard enough to leave a mark.

"Owww..." he whines into his pillow. "What?"

She shoves the letter in his face. "I got a callback." Not just one, either, but this was the one that counted. He rolls over and wipes the sleep from his eyes and squints at the letter, but she's too impatient. "*Juilliard,* Stevie. They want me to come in for an audition." She reads the letter again, just to make sure, and finds it snatched out of her hands. He scans it and lets out a *whoop*, and shoves her shoulder hard enough to topple her over. "I told you so! Hot damn! Juilliard, Robs!" She's talked about it enough that he knows the significance. "You are so lucky you met me," he says seriously, and just this once she lets him get away with it because he's right. She hooks him around the neck and smacks a kiss on his cheek. "Don't I know it. I've gotta call my mom!"

He watches from his bed as she jumps up on the counter, cross-legged in only her t-shirt and underwear, and dials her mother's number. She's so excited she can hardly sit still, and he can hear Mrs. Martino's shriek from across the room. She can't stop playing with her hair, and when she sees him watching, her smile only gets bigger. He wishes she was still next to him in the bed, and then suddenly it starts to sink in that Juilliard is in *New York*.

Somehow Hopper approves his leave, and since he's suddenly calling Steve Deputy Dingus, Steve suspects Robin had something to do with it. He sits with her parents in the impressive theatre hall and nervously awaits her approach to the stage. She's wearing her sneakers so if he hadn't been watching he'd have missed her. He recognizes her Tough Robin swagger, the one she uses to mask her nerves, and gives her a double thumbs up. He can see the corner of her mouth quirk up and watches as she sets up, and knows no performance will ever compare to that first one in their living room. He knows the piece by heart; she's practiced it so much over the last couple of months that *he* could have played it, and he knows that she nails it.

He expects the Martinos to take them to some swanky restaurant to celebrate, but they surprise him by choosing a divey joint that turns out the best pizza he's ever had. Robin is absolutely glowing, and she keeps shooting him looks he interprets as a sign she wants to ditch her parents. When they finally manage it, they wind up on the rooftop terrace of their hotel. They're shoulder to shoulder to ward off the brisk wind as they watch the city lights.

"Steve, what if I get in?" She sounds worried, not excited. "What happens to us?"

He's thought of nothing else since her letter came, but doesn't want to ruin the night for her, so he shrugs lightly. "I'm not going anywhere, Robs. I'm taking the bedroom though, that's for damn sure." As he'd hoped, she smiles. "I wouldn't be here without you."

"And I wouldn't be Deputy Dingus without you," he counters, hoping to stem the tide of emotions he doesn't want to deal with. "Which, by the way, Hopper is calling me now, so it's only a matter of time before the rest of them do too. So thanks for that."

"What are friends for?"

He looks away. "Duh. For getting tortured by Russians together."

"I still can't believe that happened."

He won't tell her, but it had been the best day of his life.

She doesn't get into Juilliard, but she does get accepted to her second-choice school. Honestly, she's relieved. She leaves for Boston in a couple of days, and the last few weeks have been weird at best. Steve's been touchy and irritable, and so has she, really. She knows he doesn't want her to leave, and she can't imagine her life without him anymore. That comes as a bit of a surprise because it was only a few years ago that she'd loathed the very sight of him. But it's not until she returns to the apartment after taking the last of her boxes to her parents' for storage that it truly hits her.

The grief hits her so hard she almost doubles over. The bedroom is

stripped bare of her things, and she can't stand to see it so she shuts the door and goes to Steve's alcove. He's lying on his futon, tossing a ball of socks into the air. "Hey Dingus," she says, and crawls in next to him. He glances over but doesn't stop throwing and catching. "Hey."

She sighs against his shoulder. "This sucks."

He rolls over to face her and studies her like he's trying to memorize every inch of her. "Yup." They're so close they're practically touching and Steve takes her hand and links their fingers. He's never done that before, but she finds that she doesn't mind. There's a wealth of things unsaid in his eyes, and she can't bring herself to look away. It's just the opposite. Her knees touch his, then her thighs, and then, before she can even think about it, she leans in and touches her lips to his.

He doesn't freeze or pull away. His mouth moves slowly against hers. He's tentative and teasing, and even though *she likes girls*, she opens for him, because she likes this too. His tongue sweeps over her lips and she pulls him over top of her and marvels at the firm weight of him against her. She doesn't know what this is, just that right now she wants it. He seems to wonder too because he pulls back for a moment in silent question. She only pulls him back in, and after that there is no going back. He is hers, and she wants to get lost in him.

Steve lives in the moment, and this is one he never wants to end. He doesn't question it; not as they are stripped bare before each other, not as he feels her tremble under his hands, his mouth, or as she gasps once in surprise, not as he finds his own release when she sighs his name against his neck.

The questions come afterward, when they lie together under his tangled sheet. He's afraid to speak and break the spell, and wonders what she's thinking. He drifts off, and when he wakes again, she's still there, breathing deeply against his skin. He doesn't want to move, but gingerly gets up to turn off the lights and use the bathroom, and when he slides back into bed next to her, she shifts around to curl up against him.

God, he loves her.

When he wakes again the sun is blinding through the window, and she's gone. Then he finds her set of keys on the counter and it *devastates* him, because she didn't even say goodbye. It would have hurt less if she'd stabbed him. He throws his fist at the wall and calls in sick to work.

It's a week or so later when he's taking his anger out at the gun range that he runs into Nancy. He sees her there sometimes; she's a crack shot these days. She must see it on his face because she invites him out for a drink right then. They don't cross paths much anymore, but he welcomes the company of an old friend. They wind up at a place called Rooster's, a dive she likes, and since it has cheap whiskey he doesn't care. She lets him sulk his way through a couple of shots before she gets to the point.

"What's going on, Steve? You look like shit."

He remembers back to that day with Robin when she'd accused Nancy of being a priss, and laughs a little. "Oh, you know, just the person I'm completely in love with will never love me back."

Nancy's brows wing up; clearly she'd been expecting something else. She shifts into interrogation mode. "Who?" She pauses, takes a sip of her beer. "Robin?" He tips his glass at her before tossing it back. Nancy frowns. "What happened? I thought you two were joined at the hip."

Steve's a little surprised, then supposes that he and Nancy really had drifted apart. "Friends," he says shortly. "Always just friends."

"Well friends can turn into the best lovers sometimes."

Steve's heart twists because she's never been more right. He remembers when he thought he'd been in love with Nancy once, but now after his night with Robin, he knows the difference. He sighs heavily. "No, Robin's..." How could she not know? "She's... well, let's just say that you're more her type than I am."

Nancy's taken aback, and then he remembers why Robin didn't tell people. "Oh," she says. But to her credit, she settles into the idea quickly. "So did something happen?" She asks again, ever the

investigator, and he lets the story spill out. He'd been okay with loving her from afar, knowing it would always be one-sided, but then she'd kissed him and everything had changed. "And then she left," he concludes bitterly. "I was dealing with it, that she was leaving, because we'd still be friends no matter where she lives. Then she completely fucks with my head and takes off without even a goodbye."

Nancy's quiet for a long moment and picks at the label on her beer bottle. "Has it always been like that? Did you love her the whole time?"

"I - well, she was my friend for a long time first. The best friend I've ever had, honestly. It was the Russians that really cemented it," he jokes. It's nice to think about her that way again. Nancy doesn't get it, but that doesn't matter. "I remember the minute I fell for her, though. I asked her to play me something on her cello, and she did, and it was just-" he snaps his fingers. "Instant."

"I didn't realize you were such a romantic," Nancy teases gently, and Steve shrugs. "I'll be straight with you, Steve. If I had that kind of thing in my life – a real, true friend – I'd do whatever I could to hang on to it. You need to talk to her and sort it out."

She's right. Steve knows she's right because it's that Robin didn't say goodbye that hurts more than anything.

"Thanks, Nance," he says as she gets up to leave. "Hey, hang out soon?" Nancy Wheeler had turned into a pretty fucking cool chick, and he could use a friend like that. She smirks. "Anytime, Deputy."

Steve leans against the doorframe and tries to calm his fluttering nerves. When the door finally opens, she takes one look at him and her face crumples.

"I'm sorry," she says immediately. "I'm so sorry."

"You didn't even say *goodbye*," he accuses immediately, even though he promised himself he'd stay calm. Her dorm room is small and she collapses on the edge of the bed. He sort of hopes the guilt is eating

her up inside. "I didn't know how. After what happened-"

"Yeah. About that."

"Please, Stevie, don't hate me."

He sighs heavily, heart aching. "Damn it, Robin. I don't. You know I don't. That's not the problem."

She looks up at him, eyes swimming with tears and guilt. "I love you so much, you know? That night was... I just hoped – I wanted so badly to love you that way too."

"But you don't."

"I liked being with you, being that close to you, but it wasn't enough." Her shoulders sag. "I treated you like Lisa treated me, and now everything's ruined." She's crying earnestly now, and he can't stand it. He kneels on the floor in front of her and takes her hands. "Robs, it's not. You didn't ruin anything. We gave it the old college try, but if I can't turn a gay girl straight, nobody can." She chokes on a sob and shoves him lightly. "Don't joke. I hurt you because I'm a selfish bitch."

"Yeah, it hurts," he admits. "Falling for someone completely out of reach always sucks. But the thing is, Robs? You were willing to try, and that's pretty fucking incredible."

"Goddamn it," she sighs, sounding resigned. "Tammy Thompson was right. You really are perfect."

He bursts out laughing and she smiles tremulously. He wipes her wet cheeks with his thumbs. "I'll get over you, Martino, but I'm not losing my best friend." She hugs him, and neither want to be the first to let go. He only moves when he gets a cramp in his knee, and they wind up sitting on the floor together, leaning against her bed.

"So, I should thank you," he says after awhile. "All of Hawkins thinks I'm Deputy Dingus now."

"They do not," she rolls her eyes.

"I pulled Max Mayfield and El Hopper over the other day - they're

always driving that Camaro around like it's the Indy 500 – and they must have called me Deputy Dingus fifteen times in ten minutes. They've probably died laughing by now."

He shoots Robin a withering glare and can see how hard she's trying not to laugh. Finally she cracks, and laughs her belly laugh and it's the best sound in the world.